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E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/10/2016
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [EC](#)
SUBJECT: NOBOA DROPS OUT OF PRES. RACE

Classified By: PolOff Vanessa Schulz for reason 1.4 (b&d)

¶1. (U) Summary: Alvaro Noboa, Institutional Renewal Party of National Action (PRIAN), withdrew from the presidential race on July 9, citing low showings in the polls. PRIAN deputy Vicente Taiano told us his party would either seek an alliance or support an independent, and ruled out the possibility Noboa's wife Anabella Azin would run. Meanwhile, the party elected a new national director, Jorge Cevallos, who called for an August 6 party assembly to announce who the party would support for president. Social Christian Party (PSC) presidential candidate Cynthia Viteri has yet to announce a running mate, yet Alfonso Espinosa, a popular journalist, is rumored to be a possible choice. End Summary.

Noboa Drops Out Of Race

¶2. (SBU) PRIAN party candidate Alvaro Noboa withdrew himself from the presidential race on July 9. The banana magnate, one of Ecuador's wealthiest individuals, had run in the past two presidential elections, making it to the second round both times but losing first to Jamil Mahuad in 1998, then to Lucio Gutierrez in 2002. Noboa cited the unlikely prospects of being able to form a governing coalition in congress, underscored by low showings in the polls, as the cause for his withdrawal. PRIAN deputy Vicente Taiano denied the move was related to the recent alien smuggling scandal involving PRIAN congresswoman Sandra Sandoval. Taiano told PolOff on July 10 that Noboa had withdrawn for the sake of "governability", believing that while he had a good possibility of winning, if elected, the strong resistance against him would lead to his early ouster.

PRIAN Names New National Director

¶3. (SBU) The PRIAN party held an assembly on July 9 to elect a new national leader, Jorge Cevallos Macias, a deputy from Manabi province. Cevallos announced that the PRIAN would support a presidential candidate for the October elections, who would not necessarily be a member of the PRIAN party. Taiano confirmed this to us, saying the PRIAN party was looking for a possible alliance or supporting an independent candidate. He said the PRIAN would not support someone from within their party for the presidency. Taiano told us that Anabella Azin, Noboa's wife, who was mentioned as a possible replacement, was not an option.

Populist Alliance In The Works?

¶4. (SBU) Party leaders have not ruled out an alliance with

ex President Gutierrez' Patriotic Society Party (PSP) and/or Abdala Bucaram's Ecuadorian Roldosista Party (PRE), both of which are still lacking a strong presidential candidate. Former Gutierrez Trade Minister Ivonne Baki told the DCM today that the three parties would be meeting tomorrow to advance their talks toward backing a consensus candidate. Baki herself is one of the possible contenders.

¶5. (U) According to Cedatos polling firm, Noboa's withdrawal will cause a 10 percent increase in the percentage of undecided voters. Some speculate center-right, coastal-based and moderately populist PSC candidate Viteri may receive most of Noboa's support along the coast. Leftist candidate Rafael Correa could also receive some of the votes.

Viteri Expected To Announce Running Mate Soon

¶6. (SBU) Cynthia Viteri, PSC presidential candidate, has yet to announce her running mate. Viteri had said the announcement would be made after the World Cup finals which occurred on July 9. Press also confirmed what Mauricio Pozo -- former Gutierrez Finance Minister -- told the Ambassador privately, that he would not be Viteri's running mate. Currently the person most mentioned as Viteri's likely choice for running mate is Ecuavisa television channel news anchor Alfonso Espinosa de los Monteros. Espinosa is a respected journalist, who is originally from Ibarra, capital of the Sierra province of Imbabura. Monteros could help boost Viteri's approval in Quito, currently in the single digits.

Comment

¶7. (C) Noboa's unexpected withdrawal has left the PRIAN party scrambling for a new election strategy, which may include a populist alliance. A PRIAN-PRE-SP alliance, with the right candidate, would be a significant factor in the electoral calculus. If the PRIAN fails to build a strong, acceptable alliance, the PSC party's candidate Viteri could capture more coastal support. But we also remain concerned that leftist Correa could capture a significant percentage of Noboa's votes.

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